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JAMES BARBOUR

W. S. LONG, A. B.

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## JAMES BARBOUR.\*

W. S. Long, A. B.

The period from 1815 to 1845 has been well named one of nationality and democracy,<sup>1</sup> since the progress of these forces stands out pre-eminently as the great work of this time. The second war with Great Britain had kindled the whole country into a new flame of national patriotism.<sup>2</sup> Transportation was revolutionized by the introduction of the steamboat and by the development of canals and turnpikes. The factory system, nourished by the restrictions of the Embargo and war, developed rapidly. The expansion of cotton planting transformed the activities of the South, and turned them into the newer regions of the Gulf, and gave a new life to the decaying institution of negro slavery. A stream of immigrants began to pour into the new lands of the West, and there, among the rough and healthful conditions of pioneer life, democracy arose in a society in which strong manhood was the basis of equality. This restless spirit soon began to react upon the older states through those strong western leaders who looked upon government, not as an evil, but as an instrument for good, and with the rise of their influence, the day of nationalism began to dawn. But then the interests of sections clashed. The tariff enabled manufacturers of the North to grow rich, while the farmers of Virginia and the South were being impoverished. The tariff collected money from them which Congress now wished to spend for internal improvements. John Randolph of Roanoke, Spencer Roane, John Taylor of Caroline, and others began a determined fight against these loose construction tendencies, and a great popular reaction followed their lead.<sup>3</sup> Then as the nation tended to sink back into the old ruts of particularism, the majority of the old Republican party held out for a still stricter interpretation of the Constitution and called themselves the National-Democratic party. But the still

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\*The Bennett History Medal was awarded the writer of this essay.

<sup>1</sup>Ashley, *Federal State*, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup>Babcock, *American Nationality*, Chapters IX to XVIII.

<sup>3</sup>Turner, *Rise of the New West*, p. 4.

powerful minority broke away from this attitude and under the leadership of Clay, united to form the National-Republican party, afterwards called Whig.<sup>4</sup> It should be borne in mind, however, that the old Republican party had not always been consistent in their advocacy of state rights. The purchase of Louisiana, in 1801, under Jefferson, and the United States Bank, and the Tariff Acts of 1816 under Madison, made it, in fact, strongly nationalistic.<sup>5</sup> At this time, however, new issues were appearing which were to draw a sharp line through the old party, showing some men committed definitely to a policy of nationalism, and turning some who had favored the policies of 1816 back to the extremer tenets of the old-time faith. There were many causes for this division into loose and strict constructionists. Sectionalism was a main cause; the injection of the personality of Andrew Jackson into the presidential contests of 1824 and 1828 was another cause; and the birth of organized politics under Martin Van Buren, Thomas Ritchie and others, played its own large share.

This was the period which was to claim the best energies of James Barbour. His unselfish devotion of these energies carried him too far beyond his fellows in Virginia to permit any return upon the crest of this reaction, and when his maturer wisdom might have helped them most, his fellow citizens mistook this stand for principle, for a desertion of their interests, and in return, deserted him. It is hard to reconcile the hot defender of the Virginia Resolutions of 1799 with the man who later in the Senate voted for the bank bill, the bill for internal improvements, and the tariff, and who, still later, endorsed the nationalistic policy of John Quincy Adams. But if any defense be necessary at all, we can surely point to the respective changes of Calhoun and Webster, and Barbour stands in good company indeed.

He was born at Barboursville, in Orange County, June 10, 1775,<sup>6</sup> only twenty miles from the home of Jefferson and one year before the pen of Jefferson recorded our Declaration of

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<sup>4</sup>Ashley, *Federal State*, p. 141.

<sup>5</sup>Burgess, *The Middle Period*, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>*The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*. Vol. V, p. 446.



Independence. Madison lived only a few miles away and attended the church of which Thomas Barbour, father of James, was vestryman.<sup>7</sup>

James Barbour's ancestry was very honorable. There are many legendary accounts of the founding of this family in Virginia, some of them conflicting, and many of them improbable.<sup>7a</sup> What seems to be the most reliable account however, is the following extract from an autograph note in the Bible of Gov. James Barbour: "The farthest back I have been able to trace with any certainty, is my great-grandfather, James Barbour, who came to this country from Scotland, in the latter half of the 17th Century. He came in the character of a merchantman, and was wrecked on his first adventure. His friends, as stated by tradition, being rich, furnished him with another cargo which he turned to a profitable account, in (I believe) the county of King and Queen. He had issue, only one son, whom he called after himself, James, who married Sarah Todd, of a most respectable family. My grandfather's prospects in life were considerably shattered by the second marriage of his mother, by which a second son was born who by some means obtained control of the whole Barbour estate, and squandered it. James then left the home of his childhood, and went to Culpeper county, near the end of the first quarter of the 18th Century, being the first settler of the country lying between the eastern base of the Blue Ridge and the Southwest Mountains. Here he lived, died, and was buried."<sup>8</sup> He was a vestryman of St. Mark's Parish at its organization

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<sup>7</sup>*Old Churches, Ministers, and Families in Virginia*, Vol. II, p. 90.

<sup>7a</sup>Note.—All accounts agree that the founder of the Virginia family was Scotch. Some trace this ancestry back to a William Barbour, said to have been a younger son of the Baron of Mulderg. Other accounts point to John Barbour, the Scottish poet, and author of "The Bruce" (see Green, *Notes on Culpeper*, Part II, p. 135, and Peter, *U. S. Supreme Court Reports*, Vol. XVI). The name is rendered *Barber* in the State Land Reports, and from a seal ring lately in their possession, the arms displayed are those of the family in Staffordshire, England: Gules, three mullets, argent, with a bordure ermine. Crest: A passion cross on three steps; Gules. The motto: "*Nihilo nisi Cruce*," seems to indicate an origin in the days of the Crusaders. (See Hardesty, *Virginia and Virginians*, Vol. I, p. 114.)

<sup>8</sup>Green, *Notes on Culpeper*, Part II, p. 135.

in 1731.<sup>9</sup> He appears as a grantee of lands in St. George's Parish, Spottsylvania county, June 26, 1731, and again in 1733, in St. Mark's Parish of the same county.<sup>10</sup> He was presiding justice of the Culpeper Court in 1764, and died in 1775 in Culpeper county. His widow Sarah, a second wife, died in 1781. Their wills are both recorded in Culpeper county, and show them both possessed of large estates.<sup>11</sup> They left five sons and four daughters, of whom Thomas Barbour, father of Gov. James Barbour, was the second son. He married Mary Pendleton Thomas of Orange county. He was a member of the House of Burgesses from Orange county, and signed the Non-Importation Act of 1769. In 1775, he was a member of the "Committee of Public Safety" for Orange county.<sup>12</sup> After the formation of the Union he was a member of the Virginia Legislature. Then Richard Henry Lee, in a letter to his brother, Arthur Lee, wrote that he was glad that Thomas Barbour was in the state councils, "For he is a truly intelligent and patriotic man."<sup>13</sup>

Such was the stock from which sprang this race of statesmen, and during the period from 1821 to 1825, a time when Clay, Webster, Rufus King, Nathaniel Macon, and Pinkney of Maryland made our national legislature a wrestling place for giants, we find our James Barbour one of the acknowledged leaders of the Senate, while his brother, Philip Pendleton, and their second cousin, John S. Barbour, were prominent members of the lower House.<sup>14</sup>

In James Barbour we have an example of that inherent

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<sup>9</sup>Note—This extract, in all its details, is borne out by a number of other authentic accounts. (See Hardesty, *Virginia and Virginians*, Vol. I, p. 113; and Peter, *U. S. Supreme Court Reports*, Vol. XVI.)

<sup>10</sup>Smith, *Governors of Virginia*, p. 321.

<sup>11</sup>Green, *Notes on Culpeper*, Part II, p. 136.

<sup>12</sup>Smith, *Governors of Virginia*, p. 321.

<sup>13</sup>Green, *Notes on Culpeper*, Part II, p. 136.

<sup>14</sup>Note.—Prof. Turner says that, "In December of 1821, Barbour, of Virginia, was chosen speaker [of the House of Representatives] by a close vote." (See Turner's *Rise of the New West*, p. 195.) This Barbour is indexed as "James Barbour" (*Ibid.*, p. 354.) Here James Barbour has been confused with his brother Philip P. Barbour, who was chosen Speaker at that time. (See *Abridgement of the Debates of Congress*, Vol. VII, p. 216, and *Annals of Congress*, 17th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. I, p. 518.)

genius which can rise to eminence without the regular education so necessary in our own time.<sup>15</sup> Very little is known about his boyhood and early education. However, James Waddell, commemorated as the "Blind Preacher" by William Wirt, taught school for a while at his home near Gordonsville, and James Barbour studied for a short time, under him there.<sup>16</sup> While still very young, he served as Deputy Sheriff in his county, and during this time, he read enough law to gain his admission to the bar in 1794,<sup>17</sup> when he was only nineteen years old! On October 29, 1792, he married Lucy Johnson, daughter of Benjamin Johnson of Orange county, a member of the House of Burgesses.<sup>17a</sup>

In 1796, young James Barbour was elected to the Virginia Assembly<sup>18</sup> and soon gained the respect of the older members, both for his excellent judgment and for the fluency with which he expressed his opinions. In 1798, the famous Virginia Resolutions, which Jefferson had inspired Madison to write, were proposed in the House of Delegates. The discussion continued over into the next session, and then James Barbour entered

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<sup>15</sup>It has been claimed that James Barbour was a junior at William and Mary College with Robt. B. Taylor and Cabell, and that John Randolph of Roanoke joined this Class when it was Senior. (See *Branch Historical Papers of Randolph-Macon College*, Vol. III, No. 2, p. 146.) However, it is certain that John Randolph of Roanoke left William and Mary College in the spring of 1784. (See *National Encyclopoedia of American Biography*, Vol. V, p. 97, and Garland, "John Randolph of Roanoke, Vol. I, p. 22.) This would have made James Barbour a Junior at William and Mary College in 1783, when he was eight years old.

A similar mistake may be noticed in the *William and Mary College Quarterly*, Vol. VII, p. 5, where we find, in a list of Governors of Virginia from 1776 to 1861, with the places of their education:

"James Barbour, 1812-14, Private Schools."

On page 8 of this volume in a list of U. S. Senators from 1789 to 1860 with the places of their education, we find:

"James Barbour, 1815-1825, William and Mary College."

It is very likely that James Barbour has also in this last case been confused with his brother P. P. Barbour, who did attend William and Mary College.

<sup>16</sup>Scott, *History of Orange County*, p. 127; Smith, *Governors of Virginia*, p. 321; Hardesty, *Virginia and Virginians*, Vol. I, p. 114.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.; *The National Encyclopoedia of American Biography*, Vol. V, p. 446; Smith, *Governors of Virginia*, p. 321.

<sup>17a</sup>Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>18</sup>*Journal of the House of Delegates*, Session of 1796-97, p. 1.



the lists in support of them with his usual impetuous eloquence.<sup>19</sup> Although he was the youngest man in the House, he was one of the foremost in denouncing the odious laws which had called forth the resolutions, and his speech was considered the most effective that was delivered.<sup>20</sup> On January 1, 1801, he was appointed on a committee to confer with a committee from the Senate on these resolutions.<sup>21</sup> In these debates, we find a beginning of that able advocacy of the rights of the States which he maintained until continued service in a larger sphere and an experience in the national administration brought a conviction that the whole is greater than its parts. From this time on, until his election as Governor, in 1812, the name of James Barbour appears on all of the most important committees, frequently as chairman. He proposed the "Anti-Duelling Act," one of the most stringent legislative acts ever passed.<sup>22</sup> In 1800, he was chairman of a committee<sup>23</sup> which prepared a bill "To simplify the mode of procedure in real actions."<sup>24</sup> In May of 1807, he served on the grand jury which indicted Aaron Burr.<sup>25</sup> What he evidently considered his most important work in the Assembly was the bill which became the Act of February 2, 1810, and provided for the Literary Fund of Virginia.<sup>25a</sup> He later requested that reference to this be the only inscription on his tomb.<sup>26</sup> He served repeatedly as Speaker of the House of Delegates, and received much praise for the able manner in which he presided over that body.

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<sup>19</sup>Hardesty, *Virginia and Virginians*, Vol. I, p. 115.

<sup>20</sup>*Southern Literary Messenger*, Vol. XVIII.

<sup>21</sup>*Journal of the House of Delegates*, Session of 1800-01, Jan. 1, 1801.

<sup>22</sup>Hardesty, *Virginia and Virginians*, Vol. I, p. 115.

<sup>23</sup>*Journal of the House of Delegates*, Session of 1800-01, Dec. 2.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>Christian, *Richmond, Her Past and Present*, p. 77.

<sup>25a</sup>Note.—See *Report of the Second Auditor of Virginia on the Condition of the Public Debt, of the Literary Fund, and Retired Teachers Fund*, fiscal year, ending September 30, 1912, p. 52; also (Virginia) *Acts of the Assembly of 1809*, p. 15; also Scott, *History of Orange County, Virginia*, p. 182. It has been strenuously denied that Governor Barbour was the originator of this Fund. But on the strength of this evidence, I have felt justified in stating that he was, as he himself claimed. (See Smith, *Governors of Virginia*, p. 325).

<sup>26</sup>Smith, *Governors of Virginia*, p. 325.



On the night of December 26, 1811, an event occurred which threw Virginia into mourning and cast a gloom over all the country. The Richmond Theatre, in Richmond, caught fire and many of Virginia's best people were burned. Among them were Gov. George William Smith and his family.<sup>27</sup> On Friday, January 3, 1812, the Legislature met and elected James Barbour, then Speaker of the House of Delegates, Governor of Virginia.<sup>28</sup> On the next day, Andrew Stevenson was elected to succeed him as Speaker.<sup>29</sup>

On February 11th, Gov. Barbour sent a message to the Legislature asking for an appropriation for the defense of Virginia, in case of a war with Great Britain.<sup>30</sup> On March 31st he wrote to the commandants of regiments that it was the duty of Virginia to be in a state of defense. He then called upon them to use every means in their power to be prepared in case of war.<sup>31</sup> In this way he earned his title of "The War Governor." It was a trying period upon men in authority, but Gov. Barbour never faltered, and was said even to have pledged his personal means to sustain the credit of his State.<sup>32</sup> By July 4th, of this year, the feeling in Virginia against England ran so high that the customary celebrations were much more enthusiastic even than usual. The Governor reviewed the Richmond and Manchester troops, and at a dinner which followed, Capt. Heth proposed the Toast, "The Governor, our Commander-in-Chief, may his military genius equal his ardor in the cause." To which he replied, "Unanimity in our councils, and a hearty co-operation in the field will place America beyond her present conflict."<sup>33</sup> The martial Governor was evidently not well pleased with the selfish attitude of New England in denouncing the War. Similar meetings were held all over the state and the zeal of the Governor was everywhere the subject of sincere toasts. On the fifth of May, in

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<sup>27</sup>Christian, *Richmond, Her Past and Present*, p. 80.

<sup>28</sup>*The Virginia Patriot*, Vol. III, January, 1812.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, February 11, 1812.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, March 31, 1812.

<sup>32</sup>Smith, *Governors of Virginia*, p. 324.

<sup>33</sup>*The Virginia Patriot*, Vol. III, July 4, 1812.

response to an order by President Madison, Gov. Barbour issued an order, calling for four divisions of militia, each to number 1,000 men. On November 30, he sent a message to the Legislature, avowing his zeal for state rights, and defending his course. He then called attention to the fact that a larger sum of money should be left to the discretion of the Executive. He recommended that the upper James be explored, and if possible, connected with the western waters. He recommended, also, that our roads be improved, and then that the Legislature of Virginia should establish a great Literary Institution, equal to the State.<sup>34</sup> This course was approved December 2nd with a formal re-election as Governor. This last administration was as acceptable as the first, and on the first of December, 1814, he was elected by the Legislature to succeed Richard Brent in the United States Senate.<sup>35</sup>

On the eleventh day of January, 1815, James Barbour produced his credentials, was qualified and took his seat in the Senate.<sup>36</sup> On the 19th of January, we find him with Rufus King and Wm. B. Giles opposing the amendments to the bank charter bill. "Mr. Barbour, particularly, in an eloquent manner, enforced the necessity of acting decisively on a subject which had been so long pending between the two Houses, and which so greatly interested the feelings of the community, which 'turned its eyes with ceaseless anxiety upon the dilatory proceedings of Congress.' " The amendments were lost by a vote of 21 to 13. The bill then was passed, and vetoed by President Madison.<sup>37</sup> It was then brought again before Congress, for passage over the President's veto, and Barbour voted nay.<sup>38</sup> But in a few days Barbour himself proposed (presumably at the instigation of Calhoun) a new bill to recharter the Bank of the United States. This bank was to be much larger than the old one. The capital was to be \$50,000,000, of which \$20,000,000 were to be in treasury notes, and the government was to subscribe \$10,000,000. It was to have the

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<sup>34</sup>*The Virginia Patriot*, Vol. III, November 30, 1812.

<sup>35</sup>Smith, *Governors of Virginia*, p. 324.

<sup>36</sup>*Annals of Congress*, Vol. III, p. 166 (13th Con. 2nd Sess.)

<sup>37</sup>*Abridgement of the Debates of Congress*, Vol. V, p. 304.

<sup>38</sup>*Abridgement of the Debates of Congress*, Vol. V, p. 305.

capacity of borrowing \$30,000,000. His bill passed.<sup>39</sup> The next year, we find him voting for Calhoun's famous "Bonus Bill," which his brother, P. P. Barbour, opposed so strenuously in the House.<sup>40</sup> These were his early departures from the old principle of states rights. Although he supported these measures, our champion of the Virginia Resolutions had not entirely forsaken his old-time faith.

Just at this time, an incident occurred which may have had much to do with the future of James Barbour. He brought in a resolution directing President Monroe to present a sword to Col. R. M. Johnson of Kentucky, as a token of the thanks of Congress and of the nation for his gallant conduct in the battle of the Thames, October 13, 1813. In a splendid speech, he showed how the difficulties, which had caused the testimonial to be withheld, could be removed, and then he described the battle, and the manner in which Johnson killed Tecumseh, with such telling effect, that the resolution passed unanimously.<sup>41</sup> It is worthy of note that from this time until the end of Barbour's service in the Senate, he and Johnson were the best of friends, and their names seldom appear on different sides of any question. When John Quincy Adams was elected President, Johnson, who had been one of his most consistent supporters, requested strongly that James Barbour be given a place in the Cabinet.<sup>42</sup> In a few days after this, Barbour, as chairman of the committee on foreign relations, reported a bill closing the ports of the United States to British vessels engaged in the West India trade.<sup>43</sup> Following this very closely, he championed the cause of Matthew Lyons who had peti-

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<sup>39</sup>*Abridgement of the Debates of Congress*, Vol. V, p. 309.

Note.—In the Presidential Campaign of 1840, when Barbour supported General W. H. Harrison, he was condemned for his support of this, "Balloon Bank." It may be interesting, however, to note that, even as late as December, 1819, Judge Spencer Roane, that prince of advocates for the rights of the states, wrote to Barbour, and advised him to "submit to the Bank of the United States, for the present, unconstitutional as it is." (See *William and Mary College Quarterly* Vol. X, p. 8).

<sup>40</sup>*Abridgement of the Debates of Congress*, Vol. V, p. 665.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. VI, p. 45.

<sup>42</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. VI, p. 509.

<sup>43</sup>*Abridgement of the Debates of Congress*, Vol. VI, p. 47.



tioned Congress for a remission of the fines imposed upon him under the odious sedition act of the first Adams administration. Lyons, personally, was very unpopular, but his case involved the old question which had done so much at the polls for the Republican party in 1800. It very likely reminded Barbour of his youthful fight in the Virginia Assembly. So he made a brilliant speech, denying that the unpopularity of Lyons should be held as an objection to his case, and claiming that they merely had to pass upon the constitutional question involved; that "The law was unconstitutional, and Congress ought to say so, and repair the damages made under color of its authority."<sup>44</sup> In December of this year (1819), Barbour, as chairman of the committee to which it was referred, submitted a long statement of the case, coupled with a resolution declaring that the law was unconstitutional, and asking for a committee to report a bill to that effect. The proposition failed by a few votes.<sup>45</sup>

James Barbour was now rising rapidly to that leadership which his talents so well justified. It was an important time. Sectional jealousies between the North and South had never before been so keen. The admission of Alabama as a slave state swung the balance of representation in Congress to a dead center, with eleven slave states and eleven free.<sup>46</sup> Then Missouri, a slave territory, applied for permission to form a constitution and state government. This threatened a turn in the balance, a turn which seemed to statesmen of the North more serious than ever before because they thought this their last chance to stop the progress of slavery. To them it seemed inevitable, that in the industrial scramble for the conquest of the West, the slaveowner with his slaves must surely triumph over the free laborers working as individuals. They seemed to see, in the future, the whole Louisiana Territory converted into an area of slave states.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, the South had even larger cause for fear. Population in the North had

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<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 185 to 188.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 660.

<sup>46</sup>Burgess, *The Middle Period*, p. 63.

<sup>47</sup>Turner, *Rise of the New West*, p. 155.



increased over that in the South, until in 1819, the eleven northern states could muster 105 votes in the House, against only 81 for the eleven slave states of the South.<sup>48</sup> This majority was spurred on to increased hostility to slavery by that tide of free labor which was pushing into the West, and demanding lands where freemen would not need to work in competition with slaves. But this hostility was held in check by the Senate, where each state had only two votes. So that if the North were ever to abolish slavery it would be necessary to obtain control of the Senate. Thus, there the contest centered, and there the South for years, fought with a surpassing power and eloquence for what then seemed the very basis of her economic existence. Indeed, statesmen of the South were far superior in intellectual powers to those from the free states of the North.<sup>49</sup> It was recognized both in the North and South, that slavery itself was largely responsible for this superiority. Thus we find as one of the strange tricks which fate sometimes plays, that the system which was driven by persecution to a desperate defense had itself provided the possibility for the development of defenders, whose eloquence and political genius harked back for comparison to the best that Greece and Rome had produced. Nowhere was this more evident than in Virginia. The "Virginia Dynasty" had not depended entirely upon the large number of electoral votes which Virginia could deliver. Hers was a sheer intellectual domination, supported by wealthy planters who lived upon their estates, and who, in the leisure which slavery afforded, reveled in well-stocked libraries, and studied the science of government until it became an instinct and a passion. In Virginia, plain little courthouses became the arenas of giant contests over simple points at law, and the halls of her Legislature rang unceasingly with resistless reasoning which flowed in a strange and fiery eloquence. Such was the environment of the men who were to fight for the South, and among them James Barbour was a giant indeed.

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<sup>48</sup>Turner, *Rise of the New West*, p. 154.

<sup>49</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*. Vol. IV, p. 306.

At the close of the 15th Congress, the Senate had "Resolved, unanimously, That the thanks of the Senate be presented to the Honorable James Barbour, for the dignified and impartial manner in which he has discharged the important duties of President of the Senate since he was called to the Chair."<sup>50</sup> At a dinner, during this session, his republicanism had offended the decorous John Quincy Adams, who confided to his Diary, that "He [James Barbour] was a man of affected pomposity of speech, full of prejudices and dogmatism, and of commonplace exaggeration of Republicanism."<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, on January 16, of the next year (1820) we find this entry in Adams' Diary: "With the single exception of Rufus King, of New York, there is not, in either House of Congress, a member from the free states able to cope, in powers of mind, with William Pinkney, or James Barbour."<sup>52</sup> This change of opinion is significant, and carries with it high praise indeed. Barbour was now ready to take high ground. His ability was recognized, and an opportunity was waiting to give to it its fullest expression.

When the 16th Congress convened, about the first business was the disposal of the Missouri question. In the meantime, expecting the admission of Missouri as a slave state, and determined to preserve the old balance, Massachusetts had given to that part of her territory which is now Maine, permission to form a constitution and apply for admission to the Union, if that could be effected before March 4th, of the next year.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly Maine drew up a constitution, and applied for admission without the preliminary form of asking the permission of Congress.<sup>54</sup> The North now had an opportunity to

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<sup>50</sup>*Abridgement of the Debates of Congress*, Vol. VI, p. 199.

<sup>51</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. IV, p. 226.

Note.—Mr. Barbour had maintained that an American Ambassador at a foreign court should present himself in frock coat and metal buttons, and if he were not well received, should retire in indignation, and carry on all further business by correspondence. However, Mr. Barbour is not recorded as having done this when he actually became our ambassador to England.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 506.

<sup>53</sup>Turner, *Rise of the New West*, p. 160-161.

<sup>54</sup>Burgess, *The Middle Period*, p. 77.

gain two new states with four anti-slave Senators, if Missouri could be admitted as a free state. Or if this were not possible, they would deadlock Missouri, and get Maine in, thus gaining a majority of two votes. They had a majority in the House, and succeeded in passing Taylor's amendment to restrict slavery in Missouri. When the bill came to the Senate thus amended, the hopes for the South were small. Little objection could be raised to the admission of Maine, and if that state were admitted, her two Senators would decide the deadlock in favor of the amendment to restrict slavery in Missouri. The only way to prevent this lay by way of a parliamentary trick, and accordingly, on the third of January, 1820, James Barbour rose at his seat, and served notice that he would on Wednesday, the 5th, offer a motion to couple the bill to admit Maine with the one to admit Missouri.<sup>55</sup> The motion came in due time.<sup>56</sup> The next day, Mr. Roberts, of Pennsylvania, objected to this coupling of the two bills, and moved that the bill be recommitted with instructions to the committee to separate the two, and report Maine in a distinct bill as it came from the other house.

Then a memorable debate followed. Mr. Barbour spoke at some length against the proposition to separate the bills; defended the right of Missouri to statehood, and admitted that Maine had an equal right; but denied that her haste in adopting a constitution, without the consent of Congress, could give her any claim on the Senate, or that the forbearance of Missouri should be held to make her any the less worthy of statehood than Maine. The proposition failed by a vote of 25 to 18.<sup>57</sup> Then the fight began in real earnest. Mellen and Roberts of Pennsylvania, King of New York, and the two senators from Massachusetts supported the House amendment to restrict, and opposed the Senate proposition to couple the two bills. But at no time has southern talent shone more conspicuously. Nathaniel Macon began with a wonderfully telling argument, and he was ably supported by William

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<sup>55</sup>Burgess, *The Middle Period*, p. 81; *Abridgement of the Debates of Congress*, Vol. VI, p. 425.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup>*Abridgement of the Debates of Congress*, Vol. VI, p. 386.



Pinkney, the new Senator from Maryland, with one of the most eloquent speeches which had ever been delivered before the Senate.<sup>58</sup> Then James Barbour entered the fight and fully justified the high tribute which Adams had paid him.

After a further statement of the points at issue, he showed that the South had always supported every proposition to suppress the slave trade. He said that the South did not wish now to multiply the number of slaves, but to spread them over a larger area; that the real question was, "Shall we violate the Constitution by imposing restrictions upon the people of Missouri while exercising the great privilege of forming their government; shall we violate the solemn obligations imposed by treaty? And shall we finally do an act of immeasurable injustice in excluding the people of one-half the republic from participating in that country, bought by a common treasure, and their exclusive councils?<sup>59</sup> And for what? Not to diminish slavery, but to confine it within its present limits. . . . To seduce the white population from this portion of the country, thus interdicted. . . . To drive us from the country, and surrender it exclusively to the blacks. . . . The Constitution has not authorized the exercise of such a power directly, and there is nothing in it to justify such an exercise by implication, if implication were allowable. . . . If then it be true that your discretion, even as to admission is limited, and in the present case all the constituent qualifications exist on the part of Missouri for statehood, you are bound to say that she shall be admitted as a state into this Union. If she be admitted as a state, all the attributes of the old states instantly devolve upon her, and the most prominent of these is the right to fashion her govern-

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<sup>58</sup>*Burgess, The Middle Period*, p. 84.

<sup>59</sup>Note.—Later in his speech he explained that by "Their exclusive councils" he meant that, a Southern envoy (Monroe) had bargained for the Louisiana Territory; that a Southern President (Jefferson) had approved the bargain; that a Senate, controlled by southerners had ratified the treaty; and that a house of representatives entirely controlled by southerners had appropriated the purchase money, all in the face of the violent partisan protests of senators and representatives from that same section which was then trying to monopolize this same territory with a partisan control.



ment according to the will and the pleasure of the good people of that state. Whereas your restriction deprives them of that privilege forever." Then after defending the moral issue involved, he exclaimed: "Sir, no portion of the Union has been more loyal than the South! Is this your reward for our loyalty? Sir, there is a point where resistance becomes a virtue, and submission a crime. . . . Our people are as brave as they are loyal. They can endure anything but insult. But the moment you pass *that* Rubicon, they will redeem their much abused character, and throw back upon you your insolence and your aggression."<sup>60</sup>

It is not necessary to comment upon this speech. In it he had graphically stated the whole position of the South, and he had added a fire to southern arguments which Pinkney alone could intensify. His motion to couple the two bills had made it impossible for the North to secure the admission of Maine in time to have her two senators vote upon the admission of Missouri. The sanction of Massachusetts for the statehood of Maine held good only until March the fourth. Further delay would have been foolish for the North, and they saw that a compromise was inevitable, although the movement had gone too far for the House to recede entirely. The amendment to restrict failed by a vote of 27 to 16.<sup>61</sup> The motion to unite the two bills then passed by a vote of 23 to 21.<sup>62</sup> Mr. Barbour then moved that the Senate insist on this first clause of its amendments, and it was carried.<sup>63</sup> Then Messrs. Thomas, Barbour, and Pinkney were elected a committee to confer with a committee from the House, which was led by Mr. Clay.<sup>64</sup>

During this time, excitement in Virginia reached an alarming pitch. The motion to couple the two bills was practically

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<sup>60</sup>*Abridgement of the Debates of Congress*, Vol. VI, p. 425.

<sup>61</sup>*Abridgement of the Debates of Congress*, Vol. VI, p. 425. r

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 450.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 452.

<sup>64</sup>Note.—This conference agreed on the famous Missouri Compromise, by which slavery was to be permitted in Missouri, but excluded forever from the Louisiana territory north of 36° 30' north latitude. (See Burgess, *The Middle Period*, p. 87.)

the only way to prevent restriction in Missouri. But on the same day that Barbour served notice of his intention to offer this motion, he received a letter from President Monroe, strongly advising him against the plan, and recommending that they admit Maine at once, thus throwing the South helpless upon the charity of the North.<sup>65</sup> That Mr. Barbour did not follow this advice, has already been shown. On February 9th a caucus of the Virginia Assembly was held to nominate Presidential electors. Just as they came together, a report got out that Mr. Charles Yancey, a leading member, had just received an interesting letter from Senator Barbour, on the President's position. Yancey at last yielded to the cries about him, and read the letter to them. Immediately an intense excitement prevailed, and so indignant were they all with Mr. Monroe that the caucus broke up without making any nomination.<sup>66</sup>

Then news came to Virginia that a compromise was impending, and when the nature of this compromise was understood, the excitement increased beyond all bounds. On February 11th, Harry St. George Tucker wrote Barbour that the South thought that President Monroe was afraid of losing his re-election, and was thus trying to play to the North, but that the South was unwilling to purchase his services at such a price.<sup>67</sup> On February 19th, Judge Spencer Roane wrote to the same effect.<sup>68</sup> On February 14th, ex-President Madison wrote to Barbour from Montpelier, and advised him under the conditions to yield to the compromise.<sup>69</sup> But following this closely came letters from Andrew Stevenson, Charles Yancey, Thomas Ritchie, Judge Roane, W. F. Gordon, Linn Banks, and others, all telling him of the tremendous opposition in Virginia to any compromise whatsoever; all complimenting the magnificent fight which he had made for the South, and all assuring him of their unchanged affection and support.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>*William and Mary College Quarterly*, Vol. X, p. 9.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6 to 10.

<sup>67</sup>*The William and Mary College Quarterly*, Vol. X, p. 11.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>70</sup>Note.—All of these letters can be found in the *William and Mary College Quarterly*, Vol. X, pp. 5 to 24.

Accordingly when the vote was taken on Thomas' compromise amendment, James Barbour, and James Pleasants, his colleague, voted against it.<sup>71</sup> On March 2nd, on motion of Mr. Barbour, it was decided to take up the bill again. Then Mr. Barbour moved to strike out the restrictive clause, and it was carried, when the bill passed.<sup>72</sup> On the next day, this same committee was re-elected managers of the Maine bill in conference with managers from the House, and their report was concurred in.<sup>73</sup> A very good idea of the intensity of this fight can be gained from the fact that James Barbour proposed to each Senator a convention of the states to dissolve the Union, and to agree on terms of separation and the mode of disposing of the public debt, lands, etc.<sup>74</sup>

There were no other very important legislative fights during the remainder of Barbour's service in the Senate. However, one bill came up and called from him a speech which deserves mention. It was entitled "A Bill for abolishing imprisonment for debt" and had been pending before the Senate for some time. On February 17th, 1824, James Barbour made one of the most eloquent of all his speeches in its support.<sup>75</sup>

After the struggle over Missouri had ended in compromise, another began for the next presidential election. James Barbour took very little active part in the real campaign. But he was a warm champion of a caucus nomination, and told Col. R. M. Johnson that if no one would join him, then he, "I, by myself, I" would make a caucus nomination alone.<sup>76</sup> It is not known definitely, however, whom he would have supported at this time, but he, at least, realized that no election could result in any popular vote on so many candidates, and wished to avoid throwing the election to the House.<sup>77</sup> In January, James Barbour told Col. Johnson that if the election

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<sup>71</sup>*William and Mary College Quarterly*, Vol. X, p. 7.

<sup>72</sup>*Abridgement of the Debates of Congress*, Vol. VI, p. 154.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 454.

<sup>74</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. V, p. 13.

<sup>75</sup>*Eloquence in the United States*, Vol. IV, p. 216.

<sup>76</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. V, p. 13.

<sup>77</sup>Note.—Even Thomas Ritchie favored a caucus nomination at this time, and for the same reason that Barbour did. (See Ambler, *Sectionalism in Virginia*, p. 130, and *The Richmond Enquirer*, February 12, 1824.)



should go to the House the vote would be at least two-thirds for Adams against Crawford, and that he had thoughts of giving his adhesion to Adams. This Johnson advised him to do.<sup>78</sup> It is well known that the caucus was held and resulted in the nomination of Crawford by a small minority of the Republicans in Congress.<sup>79</sup> But after the nomination, Barbour's enthusiasm seems to have waned, and in April, Col. Johnson reported that, "Barbour seems ready to give up the cause."<sup>80</sup> In May, Mr. Adams talked to Rufus King and James Barbour about his plan for a slave trade convention with England. King approved it, and Adams remarked, "But Barbour, a Caucus man, seemed very coolly disposed towards it."<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, on the 24th of May, Col. Taylor reported to Adams, "That Gov. Barbour had this day made the best speech he had ever heard from him, in support of the Convention, and had done entire justice to it."<sup>82</sup> Now he seemed to be taking Col. Johnson's advice. In December of this year (1824) Mr. Adams called on Mr. Barbour, and after talking about various public matters, asked him confidentially about the coming election. Barbour told him that the entire Virginia delegation would vote for Crawford, but that if his cause should be hopeless, they would in any case, vote for another than a mere military leader (Jackson).<sup>83</sup> A few days later, Barbour called on Mr. Adams and repeated that the Virginia delegation would vote, at first for Crawford, and then, if that were impracticable, their next choice would be for Adams.<sup>84</sup> The main facts of this election are now common knowledge, how that in the House, under the leadership of Clay, the supporters of Crawford went over and voted for Adams who was elected on the first ballot.<sup>85</sup> On February 12th,

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<sup>78</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. VI, p. 235; Ambler, *Sectionalism in Virginia*, p. 127.

<sup>79</sup>Burgess, *The Middle Period*, p. 133.

<sup>80</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. VI, p. 284.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 323.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 466.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 475.

<sup>85</sup>Burgess, *The Middle Period*, p. 142.



Col. R. M. Johnson had a long talk with Mr. Adams and strongly advised him to appoint Gov. Barbour to one of the Departments.<sup>86</sup> On March 4th, the name of James Barbour was sent to the Senate for confirmation as Secretary of War.<sup>87</sup>

Here we find the turning point in the career of James Barbour. Until this time he had been upheld by his statesmanship and genius as one of the acknowledged leaders of his State. Now he had been received into the political family of a President against whom the political leaders of New York and Virginia were soon to unite in a deadly opposition. As a member of the new administration he must help frame its policies, and consequently, be held, in part, responsible for its every act. The "Era of Good Feeling" had already broken up into a seething foment of political scheming, and Jackson, defeated, was already preparing to inflict a dire revenge upon the men, who, as he said, "had combined to cheat the people of their choice." In November, President Adams was preparing his first message to Congress, and read it to his Cabinet. Mr. Barbour objected to that part relating to internal improvements, and even Mr. Clay "thought there was much force in his remarks."<sup>88</sup> While they were discussing this message, a very striking contrast appeared between these two men. Mr. Clay was for recommending nothing, which, from its unpopularity, would be unlikely to succeed, while Mr. Barbour wished to recommend nothing that might be carried without recommendation.<sup>89</sup>

Among the first duties of the new Secretary was the disposal of those Indian tribes, in Georgia and Florida, which had already begun to block the progress of civilization. This was a very difficult matter, and gave him a great deal of trouble. Gov. Troup, of Georgia, was continually quarrelling with the federal Indian agent, and at one time threatened to treat Barbour as a public enemy, should he insist on his order to block a survey which Troup had planned.<sup>90</sup> But by a skillful

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<sup>86</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. VI, p. 509.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 510.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 59.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 136; Turner, *Rise of the New West*, p. 312.

and judicious management, Barbour was able to avert any real issue with the hot headed Governor. Thus it was left for his successor under Andrew Jackson, to stir up the trouble which caused "Old Hickory" to back down. Mr. Barbour, at first planned to incorporate the Indians within the States of the Union and to cease making treaties with them at all, and consider them altogether subject to our laws. Mr. Clay thought that the Indians could not be civilized and that they were destined to extinction. He said that he did not believe any of them would be left in fifty years. Mr. Barbour was shocked at these opinions.<sup>91</sup> In January of 1826, Mr. Barbour finally agreed on a treaty with the Creeks in Georgia, by which treaty, the Chattahoochie was to be the boundary. The President having agreed to it, it was signed.<sup>92</sup> The next month, Barbour laid before the Cabinet, his letter to the Committee on Indian Affairs. His plan had changed from the one that he at first considered, into a plan for forming all of the tribes into a great territorial government, west of the Mississippi river. This letter provoked much hostile criticism from the Virginia press,<sup>93</sup> but Mr. Adams remarked in his Diary, "There are many excellent remarks in the paper, which is full of benevolence, and humanity."<sup>94</sup>

This same characteristic of Gov. Barbour appeared perhaps more strikingly in July of this year. On July 1st, he told President Adams about the damage which recent rains had done to the estate of Mr. Jefferson and proposed that on July the Fourth, after the usual ceremonies at the Capitol, he should address the audience, and invite an immediate subscription for the benefit of the grand old sage, and that he himself would give \$100.00. Mr. Adams doubted the success of the plan. Nevertheless, on the Fourth, Barbour delivered his address, which, although only a few subscriptions were secured, Mr. Adams remarks, "was the overflowing of a generous, benevolent, and patriotic heart, respectable even in its ineffici-

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<sup>91</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. VII, p. 89.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>93</sup>*Richmond Enquirer*, February, 1826.

<sup>94</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. VII, p. 113.

ency.’<sup>95</sup> On the sixth of July, Mr. Barbour had the sad duty of reporting to Mr. Adams, that Jefferson had died at Monticello, on July the Fourth. All were profoundly touched by the strange and striking coincidence, and Barbour was especially affected, as he prepared his special order to the army, in deference, both to Jefferson and to the elder Adams.<sup>96</sup>

In December, 1826, Mr. Clay talked to President Adams about the ensuing presidential election. He said that his friends were talking about him (Clay) for vice-president, but that he did not care about this and would be willing to remain as Secretary of State if the friends of the administration would unite in supporting Gov. Barbour for the vice-presidency.<sup>96a</sup> In November of the next year when the elections in New York were going unfavorably to the administration, Barbour called on Mr. Adams and asked his opinion about the vice-presidency. Adams preferred not to interfere, but said that his inclination was for him (Barbour). Mr. Barbour then said that Mr. Clay had proposed it to him; that he wished all personal considerations to be pushed out, and let the man be selected who could give the most strength to the cause. *He did not think, however, that Mr. Clay could effect this.*<sup>97</sup>

Only a few months were necessary to make this prospect unattractive. The combination of Van Buren and his henchmen in New York with Thomas Ritchie and others in Virginia, into an organized fight against the administration in favor of Jackson had been all too successful. It was hard now not to see that the people would soon have their “Choice.” And Barbour’s desire for the vice-presidential nomination decreased accordingly. At one time the support of Gov. Barbour would have been a tower of strength to Adams in Virginia, at least. But now his identity with the administration was too well established for the enemies of this administration to leave his popularity intact. His nationalistic ideas had come up for

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<sup>95</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. VII, p. 118.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>96a</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. VII, pp. 216-17.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 352.



assault in the Jackson papers, and Jackson himself began to count as personal enemies all who did not support him. Little wonder that Barbour began to dread a campaign. But he was not inactive. One especially interesting incident was his call on Adams, March 21, 1828, to leave copies of Jackson's letter to L. W. Campbell, written in September, 1812. This letter and a note were in very abusive language, with a total disregard of or ignorance of spelling or grammar. It was proposed to publish them in some way so as to form a contrast to his printed speeches which had really been written by Harry Lee. This had already been done by a printed named Force, in Nashville, Tennessee. The plan now was to get a resolution through the House calling for the publication of the correspondence relating to the Indian passports. Jackson's friends did not know of this letter, and it was hoped to get it published in this way. Adams approved the stratagem, but it later failed.<sup>98</sup> The "Old Hero" and his friends were "on the job." Perhaps these latter suspected something of this sort, or at least were afraid to run any risk.

As early as January 23, 1828, Dr. Watkins, of Virginia, went to President Adams to urge the appointment of Gov. Barbour as Minister to England to succeed Albert Gallatin, saying that Mr. Clay had already talked to Barbour about this, and had induced him to expect it. Mr. Adams said that it would be very agreeable to him to gratify any wish of Gov. Barbour, but that he had almost promised this place to another, however he would wait until the close of that session of Congress to make an appointment.<sup>99</sup> In March, Mr. Clay told Adams that Webster desired the mission to England before he passed the prime of life. But as Gov. Barbour, who was very anxious to go, would certainly not stay more than two or three years, Mr. Webster was willing to postpone his own claims until that time. Mr. Clay then mentioned Gen. Porter and Spencer as possible successors of Barbour as Secretary of War.<sup>100</sup> Mr. Adams then notes in his Diary, "Webster wants

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<sup>98</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. VII, p. 482.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 417.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 474.

it through ambition, Rush and Barbour, as a shelter from the political storm of which they are now afraid—I cannot blame them.”<sup>101</sup> In a few days, Barbour himself spoke to Adams about his desire for the appointment, and asked to have notice some time beforehand, in case of his appointment, in order to arrange his private affairs. This Adams promised.<sup>102</sup>

In May, Mr. Clay began again to urge the claims of Gov. Barbour, and Adams remarked again that both Barbour and Rush wanted to save themselves from the wreck. Then he adds, “And it is not inoperative upon Mr. Clay’s recent propensities to resign. As the rage of the tempest increases and the chances grow desperate, each one will take care of himself. I know not that I could do better than gratify Gov. Barbour, who has rendered faithful service to his country and whose integrity and honor are unsullied. In my own political downfall, I am not necessarily bound to involve my friends. Mr. Clay thinks that the appointment of Governor Barbour would not have a bad political effect upon the administration. In this he is mistaken. The effect will be violent, and probably decisive. But why should I require men to sacrifice themselves for me?”<sup>103</sup> Such was the spirit of John Quincy Adams, the grand old Puritan. In a few days Barbour talked again with Adams about the appointment, and insisted that Adams should not let his claims be an embarrassment to the administration. Adams told him that the difficulties had cleared away, and that there was only his desire to preserve the administration unbroken to the end. But that in a few days he would decide.<sup>104</sup> Accordingly he called a Cabinet meeting for May 17th to consider the subject. Barbour asked to be absent from this meeting and was excused.<sup>105</sup> At this meeting Adams suggested that the appointment be postponed, but the Cabinet was all of the opinion that it should be made

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<sup>101</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. VII, p. 483.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 485.

<sup>103</sup>*Memoirs of J. Q. Adams*, Vol. VII, p. 525.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 538.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 544.

immediately, and that Gov. Barbour was the man for the place. Adams again mentioned the bad effect this might have on the ensuing election. Clay argued that this might not be the case.<sup>106</sup>

Adams knew more than his advisers. When the appointment became known the enemies of his administration jumped at once to the conclusion which Adams had feared; the hostile press charged at once that the administration had acknowledged its defeat; that James Barbour had deserted the cause, and some declared that the choice of Barbour to succeed Gallatin was ridiculous.<sup>107</sup> However, other papers rallied to the defense, and in the *Richmond Whig* this latter criticism was ably answered in a striking editorial: "It is the fashion in Virginia to depreciate James Barbour for the purpose of dispensing a larger share of praise to his brother, Philip P. Barbour, who has more successfully cultivated the regard of that political club,<sup>108</sup> which has so long ruled things with a despotic sway. To deny that Gov. Barbour has fine talents, only proves the weakness of those who make the objection. On the score of talent, Gov. Barbour is amply equal to the occasion."<sup>109</sup> Subsequent events proved that this was true. On the 28th of May, the Senate ratified the nomination of James Barbour as Minister to England, by a vote of 27 to 12. It may be interesting to note that among the 12 who voted "no," were John Tyler and L. W. Tazewell, both of Virginia.<sup>110</sup>

Gov. Barbour went at once to London, and took up his new duties. He was introduced to the British Premier early in October<sup>111</sup> and, under instructions from Secretary Clay, immediately began negotiations for a settlement of the old trouble

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 546

<sup>107</sup>*Richmond Enquirer*, May 26 and 27, 1828;

(From *New York Evening Post*, May, 1828).

<sup>801</sup>The Richmond Junto, of which Thomas Ritchie was one of the leaders.

<sup>109</sup>*The Constitutional Whig*, May 24, 1828.

<sup>110</sup>*Congressional Debates*, Vol. IV, Part II, p. 2773; 20th Con., 1st Sess.; *The Constitutional Whig*, May 28, 1828.

<sup>111</sup>*Niles Register*, Vol. 35, p. 121.



over slaves escaping into Canada. Mr. Gallatin had been instructed to settle this, but Great Britain had refused to treat. When Mr. Barbour pressed the subject, the British minister at first claimed that an act of Parliament made a slave free when he escaped to British territory. Barbour pointed out that this was not an act of Parliament but rather the result of a judicial decision. Lord Aberdeen then said that Sir George Murray would bring it before Parliament, where he hoped the evil could be obviated.<sup>112</sup> Early in the next year, Mr. Barbour was presented to the King and was received with marked courtesy and kindness of manner, while the reception of Mr. Gallatin, on the contrary, had been repulsive in the extreme.<sup>113</sup> But merit under the new President (Jackson) did not necessarily ensure reward, and early in the summer Barbour was recalled, and Lewis McLane of Delaware, an ardent supporter of Jackson, was appointed his successor.<sup>114</sup> The old pilots had not dreamed of such a "storm," and now they realized that no harbour could be a safe shelter from it.

It is gratifying, however, to note the favor which Gov. Barbour received while he was abroad. Most of the societies and learned institutions of London invited him to become a foreign member, and the English papers noted especially his presence at the annual festival of the Medico-Botanical Society, which boasted among its members, the crowned heads, as well as the most distinguished persons of Europe. Of the toasts drank on that occasion, one was highly flattering to the foreign ministers present, and was enthusiastically received by the company. Barbour's colleagues, the representatives of other nations, with one accord, insisted on his returning thanks in their behalf. This he did in a very modest and eloquent speech.<sup>115</sup> At a meeting of the British and Foreign School Society in London, Mr. Barbour was introduced by Mr. Wilberforce as his "Excellent Friend." He spoke a short while in response, and was followed by Lord John Russell, who: "Felt

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<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 289.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 36, March 28, 1829.

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 298-9.

<sup>115</sup>*Niles Register*, Vol. 36, p. 308. (The speech is printed here in full.)

the highest satisfaction" in Mr. Barbour, as the representative of a great nation. "It is very gratifying," said he, "to have at last, an American ambassador who can watch the progress of England with interest and pleasure, instead of the jealousy which former ministers have always held."<sup>116</sup> On July 1st, the University of Oxford honored Mr. Barbour with the degree of LL. D. This degree was at the same time conferred on many noblemen, army officers, scientists, etc. It was a great occasion, large crowds having assembled to see the famous men who were to receive honorary degrees. After the presentation of these, there was a grand procession of dignitaries.<sup>117</sup>

Gov. Barbour and his family sailed from Liverpool in October,<sup>118</sup> and arrived in New York, November 1st, 1829.<sup>119</sup> He was immediately invited to attend the dinner which New York was to give, on November 6th, to Mr. Brown who had been recalled from France. But private reasons compelled him to decline, and he set out at once for Virginia.<sup>120</sup> But the next week he was splendidly entertained at a great public dinner given by citizens of Richmond.<sup>121</sup>

In May of the next year, Gov. Barbour announced himself as a candidate to represent Orange county in the next General Assembly. He made a powerful speech at Orange courthouse, reviewing his own political life, and vindicated his acceptance of a seat in Adams' Cabinet.<sup>122</sup> The election was very close and exciting. So intense was the opposition that, although Barbour's opponent was an illiterate and unknown man, there seemed to be little doubt that he would be elected over the man who had been Governor, Senator, Secretary and Ambassador. Even a number of the members of Barbour's own family are said to have refused to vote for him, because of his connection with Adams.<sup>122a</sup> However, ex-President Madi-

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 329.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 37, p. 8.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, October 17, 1829.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, November 7, 1829.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, November 14, 1829.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, November 28, 1829.

<sup>122</sup>*Niles Register*, Vol. 38, p. 218.

<sup>122a</sup>From an account by W. W. Scott, Law Librarian of Virginia (a nephew of James Barbour).

son, old as he was, attended the election and voted for Gov. Barbour.<sup>122b</sup> At first it appeared that Mr. Davis, Barbour's opponent, had a majority of 14 votes. But the sheriff discovered a number of fraudulent votes for Davis, and declared Mr. Barbour elected.<sup>123</sup> The election was contested, however, and Mr. Barbour took his seat in the Assembly declaring that he would retire if there should be any reasonable proof that his opponent had not been defeated. A committee was appointed to look into the matter, and it *appeared* to them that Barbour had not received a legal majority, although they were unable to show sufficient proof. Nevertheless, Mr. Barbour saw that the intense partisan hostility was determined to defeat him, and on the 16th of February, 1831, he gave notice that he would retire, in order, as he said, "to relieve the committee of the expense and labour of going over the great mass of records, etc." He then bade farewell to the Assembly in a valedictory, which is one of the most beautiful of all his speeches.<sup>124</sup> But he still had many friends in Orange county, and they arranged a public dinner for him at Orange Courthouse for March 10th. Mr. Madison was invited, but was too feeble to accept the invitation, else he "would have joined in the *tribute* to be offered to one whose private worth and social virtues are known to all." Judge P. P. Barbour handsomely accepted the invitation extended him. Robert Taylor also accepted in an earnest and feeling manner. In those days political views were personal things, and it was no small tribute to the private worth of a public man to be entertained at a public dinner with his political opponents present to do him honor; and in his letter of acceptance, Gov. Barbour showed himself fully sensible of the compliment.<sup>125</sup>

He now retired to his beautiful home, "Barboursville,"<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122b</sup>*Niles Register*, Vol. 39, p. 173.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 173; *The Fredericksburg Arena*, November, 1830; *The Fredericksburg Herald*, November, 1830.

<sup>124</sup>*Niles Register*, Vol. 39, p. 464. (This valedictory is reproduced here in full.)

<sup>125</sup>*Niles Register*, March 26, 1831.

<sup>126</sup>Note.—A half-tone engraving and interesting description of this fine old mansion may be found in Scott, *History of Orange County*, p. 81 and 202.



and took very little active part in politics until early in the spring of 1839, when the presidential campaign began. He then entered heartily into the campaign, and with Benjamin W. Leigh of Richmond, was elected delegate-at-large from Virginia to the Whig Convention to be held at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.<sup>127</sup> This convention met at the Lutheran Church in Harrisburg, on the fourth of December. The next day, Gov. James Barbour was elected president of the convention<sup>128</sup> with John Tyler of Virginia as one of the vice-presidents.

In this Convention, the New York politicians, led by Thurlow Weed, effected the slaughter of Henry Clay, and availability had its first complete triumph in our national politics.<sup>129</sup> Men of every political creed had come together to seek a common advantage, and to revenge past wrongs. Old enmities were forgotten among those who had assembled, and old friendships were forgotten, too. Even James Barbour forgot the many personal services which had cemented his friendship with Clay, and in his opening speech declared, that "he had not come there with any personal prejudices in his heart, nor had any of them come to whine after the fleshpots of Egypt, but to give perpetuity to republican institutions. To reach this end, it mattered not what letters of the Alphabet spelled the candidate's name, for his part, he could sing Hosannas to any Alphabetical combination."<sup>130</sup>

During the balloting for the presidential nominee, Harrison seemed to have a lead on Clay. Finally a letter from Clay was read. It gave the convention a free rein, but Clay declined to withdraw. Barbour then made a beautiful speech in

<sup>127</sup>*Richmond Whig*, October 1, 1839.

<sup>128</sup>*Niles Register*, Vol. VII, 5th Series, p. 249; Shepard, *Martin Van Buren* (Am. Statesmen Series), p. 378.

Note.—The Gov. Barbour here referred to is listed in the index of this book as "Phillip P. Barbour" (see p. 470). Nevertheless, Gov. P. P. Barbour, who was a rank Democrat, is clearly confused here with his brother, Gov. James Barbour, who was, undoubtedly, President of this Convention. (See *Niles Register*, VII, 5th Series, p. 249.)

<sup>129</sup>Shepard, *Martin Van Buren*, p. 378.

<sup>130</sup>*Niles Register*, Vol. VII, 5th Series, p. 249.

compliment to Clay, but ended with a strong endorsement of General Harrison.<sup>131</sup> Harrison was nominated with John Tyler, of Virginia, for a running mate. It will be remembered that just eleven years before, Tyler had voted in the United States Senate against the confirmation of Barbour as Ambassador to England. Now he had come over into Barbour's own party, and Barbour atoned, in part, for his desertion of Clay, by proving that he had indeed, "not come with any personal prejudices in his heart." Since he worked faithfully for Tyler's nomination, and then sang "Hosannas" throughout the campaign to this very unusual combination. It was a memorable campaign. The men who had lost the most by Jackson's slogan, "Let the people rule," now came back with an echo to that cry, and the successor of Jackson trembled as the echoes rang. Old as he was, Gov. Barbour plunged into the campaign with his old-time eloquence. At Staunton, he met Gov. William Smith in a debate and spoke for five hours. Gov. Smith himself later pronounced this speech "the ablest he had ever heard from the lips of any man."<sup>132</sup> Soon after this Barbour made a speech at a convention at Martinsburg, Virginia (now West Virginia), which the *Richmond Whig* noted as "The most magnificent burst of eloquence to which the times have given birth."<sup>133</sup> These were the times, too, of *Clay*, *Calhoun*, and *Webster*!

If we leave out any thought that Gov. Barbour may have been spurred on by memories of former personal wrongs, and think only of the great issues which were at stake, there is something sublime in this his last great fight. After ten years of retirement from his thirty years of eminent public service, he had come back before the people, not seeking for office, but to warn them against the "Little Magician" and his crew of politicians, and to help "give perpetuity to Republican institutions." A contemporary remarks: "Gov. Barbour presented an imposing appearance, with striking face, long, shaggy eyebrows, and head covered with silvery flowing locks; with

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<sup>131</sup>*Niles Register*, Vol. VII, 5th Series, p. 378.

<sup>132</sup>Bell, *Memoirs of Gov. Wm. Smith*, p. 14.

<sup>133</sup>*Richmond Whig*, September 21, 1840.

a majestic and sonorous voice, he filled one's conception of a Roman Senator in the last days of the Republic."<sup>134</sup>

At the close of this contest, broken in health by the strain, he went to Baltimore and Philadelphia to consult certain eminent surgeons and physicians, and it was found that he had been suffering for several years under the effects of a slow and insidious disease which had gradually impaired his constitution. The surgeons could give him no hope for a permanent cure, and he returned sadly to "Barboursville." In December of 1841, he started again for Baltimore, this time by way of Richmond where he was to attend the Agricultural Convention. But the trip to Richmond exhausted him, and after a few days of rest there, he returned again to "Barboursville." After a few weeks of rest, he seemed to recover again, and was able to take charge of his estate, but as summer approached the old statesman weakened fast, and on the seventh of June, in the possession of his mental faculties, and conscious of the approaching end, he died, surrounded by his family.<sup>135</sup> Now the hand of death had silenced his enemies, and the voices of his friends united into one full chord of praise. From among these many notes, the fittest one declared him: "One of the noblest of the sons of Virginia, the virtues of whose private life and character outshone all of the splendor with which popular favor or political distinction could adorn his name."<sup>136</sup> It is characteristic of the man that he desired only this simple inscription on his tomb:

"Here lies James Barbour  
Originator of  
The Literary Fund  
of Virginia."<sup>137</sup>

But he shares the fate so common to distinguished Virginians, since even this small tribute has been denied him,

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<sup>134</sup>Bell, *Memoirs of Gov. Wm. Smith*, p. 14.

<sup>135</sup>*Richmond Whig*, June 16, 1842.

<sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup>Smith, *Governors of Virginia*, p. 325.



and he still lies in an unmarked grave. However the little town of Barboursville stands near where his home had been, and Barbour county in West Virginia, formed in 1842, also perpetuates his name and memory.<sup>138</sup> Time has not yet healed the enmity which his desertion caused in Democratic Virginia, and the silent neglect of his contemporaries proves all too eloquently how intense this enmity had been. It is not our task to defend James Barbour, but only to ask that his critics study closely all his actions before condemning any single motive of this man whose whole life supports no baser charge than that he stood for conviction in the face of political disaster, and refused to cringe for safety before the altar of a demagogue.

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<sup>138</sup>Smith, *Governors of Virginia*, p. 325.















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